

# Annual Report 2025

Center for Rehabilitation in Global Health Systems



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## 1 Summary

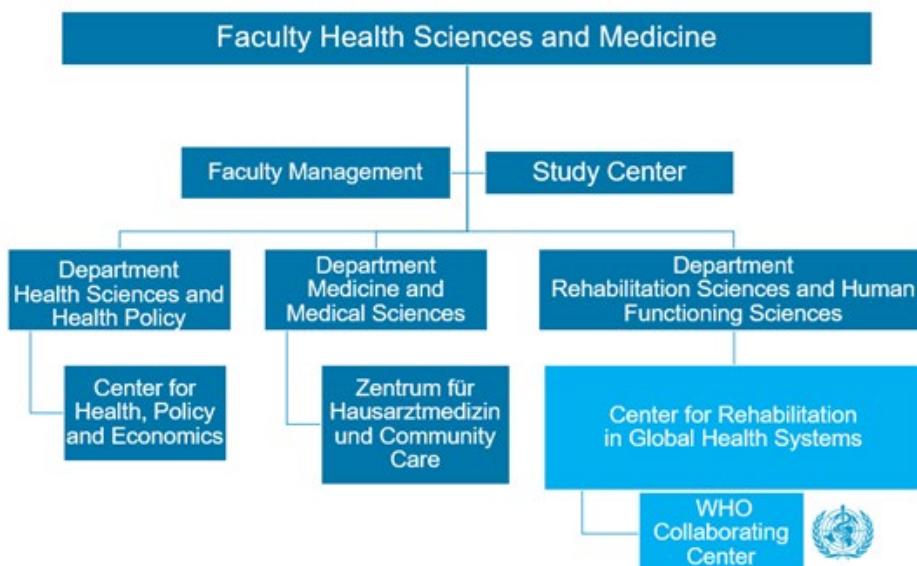
The University of Lucerne's Center for Rehabilitation in Global Health Systems (CRGHS), established in October 2017, is hosted by the Department of Rehabilitation and Functioning Sciences of the Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine. In 2025, Prof. Carla Sabariego served as Director of the CRGHS and Head of the WHO Collaborating Center, with Prof. Sara Rubinelli as Co-Director of the CRGHS and Co-Head of the WHO Collaborating Center, and Prof. Gerold Stucki as Co-Director of the CRGHS. In 2025, the CRGHS contributed to the evaluating the relevance of the WHO Resolution "Strengthening Rehabilitation in Health Systems" in Switzerland, consulting stakeholders and experts in Switzerland to develop relevant policy considerations, which have been summarized in a policy brief. In September 2025, the CRGHS co-organized the second LIFE Forum Rehabilitation together with the Lucerne Initiative for Functioning, Health and Well-being (LIFE), a conference uniting academia, clinical practice, and policymakers to address the resolution's implications for Switzerland. Additionally, the CRGHS played in 2025 an active role in the World Rehabilitation Alliance, participating in its "Research" and "External Relations" workstreams. The CRGHS also made significant academic contributions, publishing 23 articles and editorials in relevant scientific journals in 2025. Furthermore, the CRGHS was in its second four-year designation period as a WHO Collaborating Center, actively supporting the WHO initiatives "Rehabilitation 2030," "Make Listening Safe," and the "UN/WHO Decade of Healthy Aging" through activities in a clearly defined workplan.

**The Center for Rehabilitation in Global Health Systems' major goals are to pursue educational, research and implementation activities leading to the development of expertise and the know-how necessary to strengthen rehabilitation in global health systems.**

## 2 Governance, members, advisory board

### 2.1 Organigram CRGHS

The CRGHS and its WHO Collaborating Center are located in the Department of Rehabilitation and Functioning Sciences in the Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine as is demonstrated in the following organigram:



## 2.2 Governance CRGHS 2025

| Name   | Affiliation   | E-Mail Address           |
|--|---|--------------------------|
| Carla Sabariego<br>Director CRGHS<br>Head of WHO Collaborating Center      | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine, Rehabilitation and Functioning Sciences | carla.sabariego@unilu.ch |
| Sara Rubinelli<br>Co-Director CRGHS<br>Co-Head of WHO Collaborating Center | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine, Health Sciences and Health Policy       | sara.rubinelli@unilu.ch  |
| Gerold Stucki<br>Co-Director CRGHS   | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine, Rehabilitation and Functioning Sciences | gerold.stucki@unilu.ch   |
| Roxanne Maritz<br>Coordinator  | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine, Rehabilitation and Functioning Sciences | roxanne.maritz@unilu.ch  |

## 2.3 Members CRGHS 2025

| Name                        | Affiliation  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Jerome Bickenbach           | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine                         |
| Christian Baumgartner       | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine                         |
| Thekla Brunkert             | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine                         |
| Adrian Martinez de la Torre | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine                         |
| Thomas Nyffeler             | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine                         |
| Diana Pacheco               | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine                         |
| Claudio Perret              | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine                         |
| Vanessa Seijas              | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine                         |
| Sara Rubinelli              | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine                         |
| Stefan Boes                 | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine                         |
| Sarah Mantwill              | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine                         |
| David Weisstanner           | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine                         |
| Peter Kirchschläger         | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Theology   |
| Bernhard Rütsche            | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Law  |
| Mira Burri                  | University of Lucerne, Faculty of Law  |
| Nicola Diviani              | Swiss Paraplegic Research, Health Systems, Policy and Communication Unit, Nottwil      |
| Stefan Goetz                | Clinic St. Katharinental, Spital Thurgau AG  |
| Oliver Stoller              | ETH Zürich, Competence Centre for Rehabilitation Engineering and Science               |
| Urban Schwegler             | Swiss Paraplegic Research, Work and Integration Unit, Nottwil                          |
| Anke Scheel-Sailer          | Berner Reha Zentrum, Department of Musculoskeletal Rehabilitation                      |
| Luise Menzi                 | Soziale Arbeit, Berner Fachhochschule  |
| Christian Sturzenegger      | SUVA, Chief Medical Officer, Rehaklinik Bellikon                                       |
| Jan Reinhardt               | Sichuan University, Chengdu, China, Institute for Disaster Management & Reconstruction |
| Birgit Prodinger            | Universität Augsburg, Medical Faculty  |
| Reuben Escorpizo            | University of Vermont, Department of Rehabilitation and Movement Sciences              |

## 2.4 Advisory Board CRGHS 2025

| Name                  | Affiliation   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Melanie Behr          | Quality Management, REHAB Basel   |
| Mirjam Brach          | Swiss Paraplegic Research, Nottwil  |
| Stephanie Christensen | Versorgungsmonitoring, Gesundheitsdepartement Kanton Basel-Stadt                |
| Dorothee Guggisberg   | Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Art, Division Social Work            |
| Claudia Gabriel       | Neurorehabilitation, Luzerner Kantonsspital                                     |
| Robert Riener         | ETH Zurich, Competence Centre for Rehabilitation Engineering and Science (RESC) |

## 3 CRGHS activities and projects

### 3.1 Educational activities

#### **MOOC ICF-StARS Course**

In 2022, the Swiss National Science Foundation provided extra funding for a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) related to the NRP 74 StARS project. Using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) and innovative statistical methods, the project showcased the creation of a Standardized Assessment and Reporting System (StARS) for rehabilitation functioning information. The ICF-StARS methodology, incorporating qualitative and quantitative methods like ICF-linking and Rasch analysis, facilitates harmonization and standardization of functioning information across various datasets and assessment tools.

The ICF-StARS MOOC aims to highlight the significance of standardized assessment and reporting in the health system, demonstrate StARS development, and explore potential applications. The target audience includes stakeholders involved in or assessing functioning information, such as healthcare professionals, quality managers, clinic management, government officials, health insurance officers, health science researchers, and students. The course spans over 5 weeks with a workload of approximately 25 hours, equivalent to 1 ECT.

In 2025, the ICF-StARS MOOC was held in September and October. The course attracted international participants from various regions worldwide, including diverse healthcare professionals, government representatives, and NGO staff. Additional information on the course and registration for further course runs can be found [here](#).

#### **From CAS Program to a Modular Continuing Education Program: Patient-Centered Rehabilitation Management**

In 2025, the concept of the CAS Program in Rehabilitation Management evolved into the development of a new continuing education program, *Patientenzentriertes Rehabilitationsmanagement*. This modular program is currently under development in close collaboration with our partners: Luzerner Kantonsspital, Schweizer Paraplegiker-Zentrum, and Suva. The new structure reflects our commitment to providing flexible, practice-oriented education that meets the needs of healthcare professionals and promotes patient-centered rehabilitation management in Switzerland. The program is scheduled to launch in mid-2026.

More information on the new program can be found [here](#).

### 3.2 Research Activities

Many research activities were conducted and facilitated by the CRGHS in 2025, two of which are highlighted below:

- Development of policy considerations and a related policy brief based on the WHO Resolution "Strengthening Rehabilitation in Health Systems" for Switzerland. This work included findings from a [published stakeholder consultation](#) and numerous expert consultations.
- Support to WHO in developing Quality Standards for Rehabilitation Services in collaboration with expert working groups representing different world regions and rehabilitation professionals.

### 3.3 Other activities

#### **LIFE Forum Rehabilitation**

Together with the Lucerne Initiative for Functioning, Health, and Well-being (LIFE), the CRGHS co-organized the second edition of the LIFE Forum Rehabilitation, held in German at the University of Lucerne on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025. The event focused on the topic "Integrated Care: Visions for the Rehabilitation Landscape in Switzerland".

Additionally, preparatory work for organizing the LIFE Forum Rehabilitation 2026 was conducted, with the event set taking place on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

### **World Rehabilitation Alliance**

The World Rehabilitation Alliance (WRA), hosted by the WHO, provides a network for stakeholders to promote rehabilitation, expand their professional connections, and share experiences. The WRA's mission is to support the implementation of the Rehabilitation 2030 Initiative through advocacy activities. The CRGHS became a member upon the WRA's establishment in 2022. In 2025, the CRGHS actively contributed to the WRA working stream on "Research," focusing on advocacy for health systems and policy research in rehabilitation, as well as the "External Relations" working stream.

## **4 Current activities and projects WHO CC**

The CRGHS is currently in its second designation period as a WHO Collaborating Centre (WHO CC) for the years 2022-2026, affiliated with the World Health Organization (WHO) Department for the Management of Noncommunicable Diseases, Disability, Violence, and Injury Prevention, Unit for Disability and Rehabilitation. The work plan for this designation period consists of three Terms of Reference (TORs), each outlining specific activities within a unified work plan. TOR 1 and TOR 2 were developed in collaboration with the WHO Headquarters in Geneva, while TOR 3 involves a collaborative project with the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| TOR 1: | Contribute, under WHO's leadership, to the implementation of the WHO "Rehabilitation 2030: A Call for Action" initiative.    |
| TOR 2: | At WHO's request, provide input towards the development of health communications for WHO's "Make Listening Safe" initiative. |
| TOR 3: | Contribute, in agreement with WHO's healthy ageing agenda in the scope of the "2021-2030 UN Decade of Healthy Ageing"        |

## **5 Outreach activities**

### **5.1 Publications 2025 (CRGHS members displayed in bold)**

- 1) **Rubinelli S, Bickenbach J, Middleton JW, Cameron ID, Sabariego C, Stucki G.** The comprehensive 360° model of research: its foundations and exemplary application in spinal cord injury. *J Rehabil Med.* 2025 Feb 12;57:jrm42019. doi: 10.2340/jrm.v57.42019.
- 2) Oña A, Yáñez C, Pacheco Barzallo A, Cárdenas D, Espinosa V, Glisic M, **Pacheco Barzallo D.** Epidemiological profile of people with spinal cord injury in Ecuador: A population-based design and cohort profile. *J Spinal Cord Med.* 2025 Feb 18:1-11. doi: 10.1080/10790268.2025.2460298.
- 3) **Sabariego C, Kamenov K, Barrett D, Cieza A, Bickenbach J, Pacheco Barzallo D.** Can we still ensure no one is left behind by 2030? Demonstrating the potential of the implementation of the WHO Functioning and Disability Disaggregation Tool (FDD11) in existing survey platforms for disaggregating SDG indicators by disability. *Disabil Rehabil.* 2025 Mar;47(5):1253-1265. doi: 10.1080/09638288.2024.2367597
- 4) **Diviani N, Chadha S, Mulas P, Rubinelli S.** Safe Listening Beliefs, Attitudes, and Practices Among Gamers and Esports Participants: International Web-Based Survey. *JMIR Form Res.* 2025 Mar 25;9:e60476. doi: 10.2196/60476.
- 5) **Seijas V, Maritz R, Morsch P, Kleinitz P, Morgan C, Yee J, Moreira B, Hodel J, Mishra S, Sabariego C.** International stakeholder consultation on models of rehabilitation service delivery to foster healthy ageing: results of a cross-sectional survey involving 124 countries and all World Health Organization regions. *Eur J Phys Rehabil Med.* 2025 Apr;61(2):161-172. doi: 10.23736/S1973-9087.25.08669-1
- 6) Negrini S, Kiekens C, Del Furia MJ, Minozzi S, Ryan R, Arienti C, Parkhill A, Côte P, Gimigliano F, **Sabariego C, Capodaglio P, Decary S, DE Groote W, Frontera WR, Mudau Q, Atkinson-Graham M, Bakaa N, Battel I, Butzbach OK, Cordani C, Engeda EH, Konstantinidis T, Iolascon G, Liguori S, Mior S, Moretti A, Paoletta M, Touhami D, Wong J, Duttine A.** Evidence synthesis of health policy and systems research in rehabilitation: a protocol for Cochrane overviews of systematic reviews on delivery, governance, financial arrangements, and implementation strategies. *Eur J Phys Rehabil Med.* 2025 Apr;61(2):335-350. doi: 10.23736/S1973-9087.24.08833-6.
- 7) Polanco B, Oña A, Gemperli A, **Pacheco Barzallo D.** Excess healthcare utilization and costs linked to chronic conditions: a comparative study of nine European countries. *Eur J Public Health.* 2025 Apr 1;35(2):216-227. doi: 10.1093/eurpub/ckaf012.
- 8) Fellinghauer C, Hodel J, Moreira B, Kim J, **Sabariego C.** Development of a functioning metric for the ageing population using data from the survey of health, ageing and retirement in Europe (SHARE). *PLoS One.* 2025 Apr 24;20(4):e0320068. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0320068.

- 9) **Maritz R**, Beganovic L, **Weisstanner D**, **Menzi L**, **Sabariego C**. Exploring perspectives on implementing the World Health Assembly's Resolution for Strengthening Rehabilitation in Health Systems in Switzerland: a representative rehabilitation stakeholder survey. *Disabil Rehabil*. 2025 Jul;47(14):3696-3707. doi: 10.1080/09638288.2024.2429744
- 10) Fernandes PDS, Nickel R, Ferreira GB, Barboza E, **Sabariego C**, Taconeli CA, Silvado C. Validation of the work functioning assessment for epilepsy - An ICF-based instrument for measuring work functioning of individuals with epilepsy. *Clin Rehabil*. 2025 Jul;39(7):902-913. doi: 10.1177/02692155251340681.
- 11) Oña A, Pacheco Barzallo A, Toaquiza J, **Pacheco Barzallo D**. Environmental barriers to participation for people with spinal cord injury. The case of Ecuador. *Disabil Health J*. Epub 2025 Jul 15: 101929. doi: 10.1016/j.dhjo.2025.101929.
- 12) **Sabariego C**, Lee L, **Bickenbach J**, Chatterji S. Estimating disability prevalence in population surveys: an exploratory study using national surveys carried out in Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania and USA. *Disabil Rehabil*. 2025 Aug;47(16):4212-4219. doi: 10.1080/09638288.2024.2441424.
- 13) Negrini S, De Boissezon X, **Stucki G**, Arokoski J, Groleger Sršen K, Rummens S, Stam H, Picelli A, Gimigliano F. Call for founding members of the European Organization For University Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (UniPRM). *J Rehabil Med*. 2025 Sep 4;57:jrm44520. doi: 10.2340/jrm.v57.44520.
- 14) Metzger S, Polanco B, Eriks-Hoogland I, Gemperli A, **Pacheco Barzallo D**. Effective and Efficient Rehabilitation. What Works Best for Persons With SCI During (Sub)Acute Phase of Rehabilitation? *Arch Rehabil Res Clin Transl*. 2025 Oct 11;7(4):100532. doi: 10.1016/j.arrc.2025.100532.
- 15) Lussi C, Schwegler R, Friedli M, Stock M, **Bickenbach J**, Zanini C, Eriks-Hoogland I, Hund-Georgiadis M, Zipser CM, Jordan X, **Sabariego C**. Barriers to providing long-term care for persons with spinal cord injury in Switzerland: a qualitative study of service delivery and workforce challenges. *BMC Health Serv Res*. 2025 Oct 14;25(1):1362. doi: 10.1186/s12913-025-13548-1.
- 16) Amatya B, **De la Torre AM**, Mukaino M, Song K, Selb M, **Stucki G**, Fary K. Optimizing the clinical functioning information tool (ClinFIT) in routine clinical practice: development of functional staging cutoff scores for rehabilitation provision and intensity. *J Rehabil Med*. 2025 Oct 29;57:jrm44170. doi: 10.2340/jrm.v57.44170.
- 17) **Bickenbach J**, Chhabra HS, Erhan B, Middleton JW, **Stucki G**; InSCI; Engkasan J. International Spinal Cord Injury Survey: The Way Forward. *Arch Phys Med Rehabil*. 2025 Nov 13:S0003-9993(25)01026-3. doi: 10.1016/j.apmr.2025.11.002.
- 18) Strøm V, Weidner N, Sadowsky C, Hla KM, Uddin T, Rapidi CA; InSCI; **Sabariego C**. Self-reported Secondary Health Conditions in Relation to Age and Time Living With Spinal Cord Injury: Results From the Second International Spinal Cord Injury Community Survey. *Arch Phys Med Rehabil*. 2025 Nov 13:S0003-9993(25)01032-9. doi: 10.1016/j.apmr.2025.11.006.
- 19) **Escorpiño R**, Osterthun R, Hiekka S, Kim O, Avellanet M, Berna L, Arsh A; InSCI; Leulfsrud AS. People With Spinal Cord Injury/Disease in the Labor Market: A Comparative Outlook. *Arch Phys Med Rehabil*. 2025 Nov 13:S0003-9993(25)01031-7. doi: 10.1016/j.apmr.2025.11.005.
- 20) Atkinson-Graham M, Mior S, Bakaa N, Konstantinidis T, Wong J, Arienti C, Battel I, Capodaglio P, Cordani C, Décarie S, De Groote W, Del Furia MJ, Duttine A, Engeda EH, Frontera WR, Kiekens C, Gimigliano F, Liguori S, Minozzi S, Mudau Q, Paoletta M, Ryan R, **Sabariego C**, Todhunter-Brown A, Touhami D, Negrini S, Côté P. Governance arrangements for rehabilitation services in health systems: an overview of systematic reviews. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2025 Nov 27;11(11):CD016309. doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD016309.
- 21) Noonan VK, Kovindha A, Perrouin-Verbe B, Corrales ACY, Hajjioui A, Joseph C, Arora M, **Barzallo DP**; InSCI Group. Health-related quality of life and healthcare systems in people with spinal cord injury: A cross-country comparison from the second InSCI community survey. *Arch Phys Med Rehabil*. 2025 Nov 27:S0003-9993(25)01052-4. doi: 10.1016/j.apmr.2025.11.007.
- 22) Castro Silva LK, Oliveira Lima LA, **Sabariego C**, de Oliveira Sousa LW, de Castro SS. The paradise-24 questionnaire: a review of language versions, psychometric evidence, and application in brain disorder. *Neurol Sci*. 2025 Dec;46(12):6181-6192. doi: 10.1007/s10072-025-08487-y.
- 23) **Martinez-De la Torre A**, Leshetkina P, Ahanor O, **Maritz R**. Integrating and standardizing functioning outcomes in rheumatoid arthritis pharmacological trials: a scoping review informed by the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). *J Clin Epidemiol*. 2025 Dec 3;190:112093. doi: 10.1016/j.jclinepi.2025.112093.

## 5.2 Conferences and WHO Meetings in 2025

- Hong Kong Rehabilitation Society 65th Anniversary Conference, Hong Kong, January 17–18, 2025. Presentation: "Rehabilitation in Primary Care for an Ageing Population." Speaker: Maritz R.
- Learning Health System for Healthy Ageing Workshop, Yerevan, Armenia, April 11–12, 2025. Workshop: "Understanding the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF)." Facilitator: Maritz R.
- World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva, May 19-27, 2025. Stucki G., Role: Participation
- IFA 17<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Ageing, Cape Town, South Africa, September 9–12, 2025. Presentation: "International Stakeholder Consultation on Models of Rehabilitation Service Delivery to Foster Healthy Ageing: Results of a Cross-Sectional Survey Involving 124 Countries." Speaker: Maritz R.

- 17th Danish National Rehabilitation Conference, Middelfart, Denmark, November 4, 2025. Keynote: "Strengthening Quality Improvement in Rehabilitation by Standardised Assessment and Reporting of Functioning Outcomes and Standards for Rehabilitation Services." Speaker: Maritz R.
- 64th International Spinal Cord Society (ISCOS) Conference 2025, Gothenburg, Sweden, 8-11. October. Presentation "The national strategy for spinal cord injury. Its development and process": Rubinelli S. Participation: Sabariego C.
- Annual Meeting CRGHS & WHO Headquarters, online, November 27, 2025. Sabariego C, Rubinelli S, Maritz R.
- 5th WHO Life Course Network Meeting, 5-6 November, 2025, Virtual Meeting "Extending benefits across the life course – Connecting Optimal Development and Healthy Ageing". Participant: Sabariego C.
- Meeting WHO Collaborating Centres and Research Partners in Healthy Ageing for the "Stakeholder Engagement with Experts, WHO Collaborating Centres, and Key Research Networks" in the Hague, the Netherlands, December 9-12. Participant: Sabariego C.

### 5.3 Consultation and working groups

- World Rehabilitation Alliance Workstream Research on Health Systems and Policy Research for Rehabilitation, monthly meetings, Members: Maritz R., Touhami D.
- World Rehabilitation Alliance Workstream External Relations: Rubinelli S.
- Member of the WHO Life Course Network (former Consortium of Metrics and Evidence for Healthy Ageing) of the former WHO Department of Healthy Ageing since 2021: Sabariego C.

### 5.4 CRGHS Communication channels

#### *Newsletter*

Regular CRGHS newsletters were sent out, totalling six in 2025. These newsletters provided information to CRGHS members, the advisory board, and colleagues about current activities and events.

#### *Homepage*

The CRGHS homepage was updated in 2025, incorporating new information related to its members, advisory board, annual report, WRA membership, and CRGHS activities, including courses, events, and current projects.

#### *CRGHS LinkedIn Page*

Regular LinkedIn posts, with over 30 posts and reposts in 2025, were created to inform the network about CRGHS events, publications, projects, employment opportunities, and other topics connected to the mission of the Center.